

Washington Update

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1. New EMS Director Welcomed in Mississippi

Mississippi has a new EMS director, Keith Parker. He replaces Jim Craig, who was promoted to the director of the Office of Health Protection in the Mississippi State Department of Health. NASEMSD welcomes new member Keith and sends best wishes to Jim. Their emails are keith.parker@ohr.doh.ms.gov and jim.craig@ohr.doh.ms.gov

2. NEMSIS Releases Version 2.05 of the NHTSA Prehospital Uniform Dataset

The NEMSIS team has released version 2.05 of the NHTSA Prehospital Uniform Dataset. This version includes all of the codes that are required to be compliant with the dataset as well as instructions on how to deal with missing or null values within the data. The XML standard also has been updated to reflect all comments received over the past six weeks. The XML documents are considered to be in their final draft form. During March the XML standard will be tested with EMS data to make sure all errors have been caught and corrected. Once the testing is complete, the XML will be finalized. It is unlikely any significant change will occur with the XML in this testing phase, which means that implementation may begin for these standards. If any errors are found, the XML will be corrected and users provided documentation with respect to what has been changed. The goal is to finalize the XML by the end of March if not earlier. For copies of NEMSIS version 2.05, visit <http://www.nemsis.org/> <<http://www.nemsis.org/>> .

3. FCC Prepares to Cancel 3,000 Public Safety Radio Licenses

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) has been conducting an audit of the construction and operational status of Private Land Mobile Radio stations. The audit includes public safety radio licenses operating below 800 MHz. The FCC has announced that it will proceed with the cancellation of licensees who have not responded to the audit. Public safety agencies that face loss of their FCC license fall into two categories: undeliverable and non-responsive. If the FCC audit letter was undeliverable, you have until March 27, 2004, to notify the FCC that your radio system is still in operation to avoid license cancellation. Final audit mailings for those agencies that fall into the non-responsive category were sent on Feb. 27, 2004. If the FCC does not receive a response to the latest audit letter by March 31, 2004, the license will cancel automatically. Complete information on the FCC's license audit is available at <http://wireless.fcc.gov/licensing/audits/plmrs/index.html>.

4. HRSA Trauma-EMS Program Requests Photos

The HRSA Trauma-EMS Systems Program desires photographs for use within future federal publications. Most sought after are pre-hospital, trauma center, and rehabilitation facility photographs. Photos relating to ?systems? and ?finance? would be welcomed. Photos should be sent in one of two formats: ?tif? or ?jpg.? Submission of the photos implies permission to publish. Any photos published will be given proper credit. For more

information, contact Jeremy Nelson at (301) 443-4905 or by email at JeNelson@hrsa.gov.

5. ACEP Taps MADD Chief Executive as New Executive Director

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) has hired Dean Wilkerson as its new executive director. For more than a decade, Wilkerson has served as the national executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). J. Brian Hancock, MD, president of ACEP, explained that the announcement comes at a pivotal time for the organization, as it strategically examines the urgent medical liability crisis, overcrowding occurring in emergency departments throughout the country, and the failure of government to adequately fund emergency medical care, especially for the poor and uninsured. Wilkerson will begin with ACEP in mid-April. His office will be in the organization's headquarters in Dallas, Texas.

6. CDC & USDA Interim Guidance on Avian Flu Available

Outbreaks of avian influenza A occur among U.S. poultry flocks periodically. Since early February, avian influenza outbreaks have been reported in several locations in the United States. Avian influenza viruses typically do not infect humans; however, several instances of human infections and outbreaks of avian influenza have been reported since 1997. Because it is possible that avian influenza could be transmitted to humans, CDC and USDA have developed interim guidance to reduce risks, including recommendations about personal protective equipment, vaccination with seasonal influenza vaccine, administration of antiviral drugs for prophylaxis, surveillance and monitoring of workers, and evaluation of workers who develop a febrile respiratory illness within seven days of their last exposure. The guidance is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/protectionguid.htm>. For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>.

7. NHTSA Requests Reports on All Unintentional Deployments of Automotive Safety Equipment

Recently, there has been increased media attention about the potential dangers of extrication-related deployments of automotive safety equipment (i.e. airbags, seat belt pretensioners, etc.) to emergency personnel during rescue and EMS operations. While there have been reports of injuries to rescuers, the prevalence of these types of incidents is not known. NHTSA's Crash Investigation Program and Emergency Medical Services Division will continue to monitor and analyze the problem. In order to determine the extent and nature of any hazard, and design appropriate countermeasures, it is crucial that NHTSA receive information on as many of these incidents as possible. Emergency service providers are reminded to report all unintentional deployments of automotive safety equipment, whether or not the rescuer is injured, by one of the following methods: 1) Phone (202) 366-2425 or (877) 201-3172; 2) Email SCI@nhtsa.dot.gov; 3) Send a fax to the attention of SCI Program to (202) 366-5374; or 4) Mail U.S. DOT-NHTSA, Special Crash Investigation Program (NPO-122), Attn: Thomas Roston, 400 Seventh St., SW, Room 6213, Washington, DC 20590.

8. FCC to Develop Rules to Track 9-1-1 Calls Made over the Internet

The FCC intends to develop new rules to track 9-1-1 phone calls made over the Internet. Voice over Internet protocol is a new technology that converts phone calls to data and sends them across high-speed Internet connections. The system bypasses at least part of the conventional telephone network. FCC Chairman Powell addressed the issue before the National Emergency Numbering Association (NENA) on Feb. 23, 2004. "The commitment of the FCC remains deep and unwavering," state Powell. Through initiatives and meetings, the Commission will work to identify issues and solutions. The first Solution Summit will be held on March 18, 2004. In addition, the FCC recently adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on IP-based Services, which asked very direct and pointed questions about public safety in order to make sure that a full and complete record is developed as a launching point, if necessary, to move to more substantial protections for public safety. Powell's complete address is available at http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-244594A1.doc .

9. Medicare Legislation Requires Compliance with OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard

The recently passed Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, Section 947 (pages 588-589), includes a stipulation that hospitals not covered by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act, such as public hospitals in states without an OSHA-approved state plan, will be required to comply with the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard. This requirement would be in addition to any needlestick laws in these non-OSHA state plan states. For the first time, hospital workers in states such as AL, AR, CO, FL, ID, IL, LA, MS, MT, ND, NE, SD, and WI, will be covered by these protections. The requirement will be effective July 1, 2004. The American Nurses Association has worked more than five years to get this language included in the new Medicare law which signifies a significant step forward in extending bloodborne pathogen protections to those at risk for exposure. For more information, contact Butch de Castro at (202) 651-7138 or email Bdecastro@ana.org.

10. New Needlestick Prevention Guide Available

The American Nurses Association (ANA) has released a "Needlestick Prevention Guide." This is part of the ANA ongoing Safe Needles Save Lives campaign. The guide is designed to educate nurses about the risks of needlestick injuries and how to prevent them particularly through the evaluation, selection, and implementation of safe needle and sharps devices. A copy of the guide is available at <http://www.nursingworld.org/needlestick/nshome.htm> .

11. Biometric Test for Hazmat Drivers Near Complete

As reported in Today's Trucking, the U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), along with dozens of trucking carriers, shippers, truck OEMs, and Intelligent

Transportation Systems (ITS) providers took part in the final Hazardous Materials Safety and Security Field Operational Test at the end of February. The test demonstrated the effectiveness of ITS technology solutions in an effort to facilitate a government plan to track all hazmat shipments in the United States and possibly stop the vehicles remotely if they were to be commandeered by terrorists for the purposes of attack. To read more, visit <http://www.todaystrucking.com/displayarticle.cfm?ID=2957> <<http://www.todaystrucking.com/displayarticle.cfm?ID=2957>> .

12. Survey Finds Nearly 73 Percent of Child Restraints Misused

Child restraint use is up, but improper use of these safety devices continues to be high, and that's why the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is launching a new campaign to get parents to use seats and use them correctly. Nearly 73 percent of all child restraints are improperly used, needlessly exposing children to an increased risk of death or injury. In February, NHTSA launched a new public service advertising campaign with the Ad Council to help educate parents of young children who have outgrown child safety seats. The campaign tells parents that the next step after child safety seats is not an adult safety belt but a booster seat. At least 4 out of 5 children who should ride in booster seats currently do not. For more information on the study and ad campaign, visit <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr06-04.html> <<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr06-04.html>> .

13. ASTHO Annual Meeting ? Call for Presentations

The ASTHO 2004 Annual Meeting Program Planning Committee invites proposals for concurrent sessions at the upcoming ASTHO Annual meeting to be held Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2004, in St. Paul, Minn. The theme of the meeting is "Communication, Cooperation, Coordination ? Building Bridges in Public Health." Proposals must be received by April 6, 2004. Direct all questions to Ms. Rusty Boyce or Ms. Kathy Krolak at ASTHO by phone at (202) 371-9090 or by email at rboyce@astho.org or kkrolak@astho.org.

14. HHS Increases Funding to Educate Seniors and Disabled Americans about New Improvements to Medicare

HHS will award \$21.1 million this year and another \$31.7 million next year to state and local programs that counsel Medicare beneficiaries to help them understand and take advantage of new benefits in Medicare. This year's funding represents a 69 percent increase above the fiscal year 2003 total, reflecting the increased emphasis on one-on-one advice and counseling for Medicare beneficiaries provided by the staff and volunteers at State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs). With the new funding SHIPs will be able to expand their efforts to work with and reach even more Medicare beneficiaries and enhance their volunteer staff through additional training and

resources. For more information, visit

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/pres/2004pres/20040310.html>.

15. HHS Will Lead Government-Wide Effort to Enhance Biosecurity in "Dual Use" Research

HHS will lead a government-wide effort to put in place improved biosecurity measures for classes of legitimate biological research that could be misused to threaten public health or national security-so-called "dual use" research. As a first step in this process, Secretary Thompson announced the creation of the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB). The new board will advise all federal departments and agencies that conduct or support life sciences research that could fall into the "dual use" category. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will manage the NSABB. Additional information on the NSABB is available at

<http://www.biosecurityboard.gov> <<http://www.biosecurityboard.gov>> or
<http://www4.od.nih.gov/nsabb/>.

16. Significant Increase in Numbers of Hospitals Reporting Hospital Quality Data

About one out of three U.S. hospitals paid by Medicare and Medicaid now are voluntarily reporting at least one quality measure from a set of 10 quality measures, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced. The new information demonstrates growing interest in Medicare's effort to promote public reporting of quality measures that can both help hospitals improve the quality of care that they provide and allow patients and their families to make more informed decisions about their hospital care. The increased participation reflects continued progress in Medicare's hospital quality initiative launched in December 2002. For additional information visit

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/media/press/release.asp?Counter=965>
<<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/media/press/release.asp?Counter=965>> .

17. FDA Announces New Requirements for Bar Codes on Drugs and Blood to Reduce Risk of Medication Errors

The Food and Drug Administration is issuing a final rule requiring bar codes on the labels of thousands of human drugs and biological products. The measure will help protect patients from preventable medication errors and reduce the cost of health care. The FDA rule calls for the inclusion of linear bar codes "such as are used on millions of packages of consumer goods" on most prescription drugs and on certain over-the-counter drugs that are commonly used in hospitals and dispensed pursuant to an order. In addition, the rule requires the use of machine-readable information on container labels of blood and blood components intended for transfusion. The bar code rule is designed to support and encourage widespread adoption of advanced information systems that, in some hospitals, have reduced medication error rates by as much as 85 percent. For more information, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040225.html>
<<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040225.html>> .

18. Upcoming Events

Homeland First Response Conference and Exhibition, March 29-April 2, 2004, Raleigh, N.C. This conference includes an EPAD session, which is the Electronic Access Provider Directory project that is supported by NASEMSD staff. Information is available at www.homelandfirstresponse.com.

24th Annual Medical Communications & Health Reporting Conference, April 22-24, 2004, JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort, Golf & Spa, Las Vegas, Nev. Information is available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/11641.html> <<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/11641.html>> .

Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services Spring Accreditation Seminar, April 28, 2004, Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. Information is available at <http://www.caas.org/> <<http://www.caas.org/>> .

American Telemedicine Association 9th Annual Meeting and Exposition, May 2-5, 2004, Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, Fla. Information is available at www.americantelemed.org.

Optimizing Emergency Department Management, May 24-25, 2004 The Wyndham Tremont, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.worldrg.com/>.

Hospital Emergency Management Strategies, May 26-27, 2004, Tremont Hotel, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.worldrg.com/>.

2004 Defense Medical R & D and Procurement Conference, June 21-23, 2004, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, Md. Information is available at <http://www.marketaccess.org/MEDCONF.asp> <<http://www.marketaccess.org/MEDCONF.asp>> .

NASEMSD Mid-Year Meeting, June 26-27, 2004, Washington, DC. A program and registration details will be posted soon at <http://www.nasemsd.org/> <<http://www.nasemsd.org/>> .

The 2004 Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Annual Meeting : ?Highway Safety ? Priority 1.0?, Sept. 25-29, 2004, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, Hawaii. Information is available at <http://www.ghsa.org>.

ASTHO 2004 Annual Meeting: ?Communication, Cooperation, Coordination ? Building Bridges in Public Health?, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2004, St. Paul, Minn. Information is available at <http://www.astho.org/> <<http://www.astho.org/>> .

Drive for Live, 2004 MADD National Conference, Sept. 29-Oct. 3, 2004, Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center, Grapevine, Texas. Information is available at <http://www.madd.org/>.